United Nations E/2015/SR.19

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 June 2015

Original: English

2015 session
21 July 2014-22 July 2015
Integration segment

Summary record of the 19th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 1 April 2015, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Drobnjak (Vice-President) ..... (Croatia)
later: Mr. Khiari (Vice-President). ..... (Tunisia)

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15-05247 (E)

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In the absence of Mr. Sajdik (Austria), Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Achieving sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all (*continued*)

1. *A panel discussion on the topic "Finding the opportunities: Matching education and skills to market demands", moderated by Mr. Antonio Prado (Deputy Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) was held. The panellists were Ms. Elizabeth A. Vazquez (President, Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder, WEConnect International); Mr. Ron Bruder (Founder, Education for Employment); and Mr. Zach Sims (Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, Code Academy, United States). The panellists made statements and an interactive discussion ensued, during which the panellists responded to comments and questions from the moderator; the representatives of Finland, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America; the observer for the European Union and the Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The representative from the International Trade Centre also participated in the discussion.*

2. **Ms. Aching** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that there was a mutually reinforcing relationship between employment and decent work and the achievement of sustainable development. Initiatives designed to spur job creation were most successful when they addressed the three dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated manner. To that end, Trinidad and Tobago had been fully engaged in the design and implementation of policies, plans and strategies to promote sustainable development through employment creation and decent work for all, with initiatives coordinated across relevant ministries. In keeping with the Medium Term Policy Framework 2011-2014 designed to implement the first phase of the "Prosperity for All" national development plan, her Government had restructured the economy to provide meaningful and sustainable income-generating opportunities for segments of the population that traditionally operated on the margins of the economy. That included implementing initiatives to stimulate the construction sector and create high-value production systems in the agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, service and cultural sectors; streamlining skills training to match the needs of expanding sectors; creating industries that allowed telecommuting and flexible working hours for women, with the necessary training and development; designing a Green Enterprise Development Policy (2014-2016) geared towards micro- and small enterprises in support of economic diversification; and establishing a Social Dialogue Task Force to support collaborative decision-making by government, employer, worker and civil society representatives and strengthen partnerships at the national level. Those actions were being implemented alongside traditional short-term employment programmes and taking place in the context of national and regional development plans but would also be brought in line with the post-2015 development agenda.

3. Stakeholders at the national level were already in the process of strengthening existing institutions and inter-agency collaboration to support implementation of the sustainable development goals. In that context, technical assistance would be required to develop best practices for promoting a demand for green products and services, especially in micro- and small enterprises, as well as for monitoring and evaluating existing national projects and programmes related to small business development. Noting the pivotal role that the Council must play in linking global follow-up to regional and national efforts in a manner that added value for all stakeholders, she expressed her country's hope that, in future, the Council's valuable integration segment would be tailored to dealing with common challenges and successes experienced by Member States in implementing the new development agenda.

4. **Ms. Lalic Smajevic** (Serbia) said that the critical issues being discussed were the main driving force behind inclusive economic growth, social cohesion and the fight against poverty and were also very relevant for the promotion of a green economy which could spur job creation. As a middle-income country, Serbia was facing specific development challenges: the job market was characterized by an imbalance between the supply and demand for labour and unemployment among young people, women, vulnerable populations and people with lower education levels, and by considerable regional disparities. To improve job market conditions, her Government had designed specific measures aimed at raising employability and

employment to ensure stable and sustainable employment growth until 2020. The National Employment Strategy for the period 2011-2020 called for measures to improve the general economic and business environment in order to attract investment and create jobs, amendments to the regulations of the mandatory social insurance system and tax laws, and the adoption of measures on formulating active employment policies.

5. The 2015 National Employment Action Plan was aimed at improving job market conditions and promoting job market institutions; encouraging employment and social inclusion of less employable persons and supporting regional and local employment policies; and enhancing the quality of the labour force and investment in human resources. The Action Plan placed greater emphasis than ever on the employment of persons with disabilities.

6. **Mr. Cardi** (Italy) said that, according to the latest data, the global employment crisis was not over and the best efforts were needed to overcome it. Unemployment rates would continue to rise, with an estimated 2012 million unemployed by 2019, while growth of the global economy remained slow and income inequality increased. However, on a positive note, there had been a global decline in workers living in poverty or with low job security. Employment must therefore remain a priority for Governments, working on the structural factors that impacted the job market, such as shrinking labour forces owing to aging populations and the radical shift in required skills.

7. His country was actively searching for and promoting appropriate solutions to the widespread problem of youth unemployment domestically and internationally. During its Presidency of the European Union, to underline the need for synergies, Italy had organized a meeting of European ministers of education and ministers of labour, with input from the social parties (Governments, employers, workers) on designing professional training and apprenticeship programmes. In the same vein, it had convened a summit of European Union leaders on unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, lending further momentum to the adoption of new approaches to match educational qualifications and job market supply with demand. His Government had also embarked on fundamental structural reform of the national job market through its Jobs Act with a view to streamlining labour regulations; optimizing active labour policies; reorganizing the employment contracts system; and strengthening mechanisms to improve work-life balance, particularly for women. Positive results were already being seen less than one year later.

8. In addition to the necessary reforms on the supply side, it was important to improve the general economic climate by sustaining aggregate demand and providing appropriate incentives for productive investment with a specific focus on small and medium-sized companies and innovation.

9. **Mr. Mukerji** (India) said that if sustainable development was truly about achieving balanced economic growth, social inclusion and environmental stewardship, then employment creation must be at the centre of it. Otherwise, those three objectives were arguably unattainable. Employment creation and decent work were prerequisites for developing countries to realize the demographic dividend and gave the poor access to the necessary resources to ensure stable and sustainable livelihoods. Among the several short- and long-term policy options for sustained employment creation and decent work discussed during the current session, skill development and manufacturing had been key in India's developmental experience. The Prime Minister of India had recently addressed those issues, speaking of nurturing an ecosystem where the economy was primed for growth that had a chain effect on all-round development, job creation, skilled labour, production and, ultimately, quality. Meeting global quality standards would then drive prosperity and improve the welfare of all.

10. Development must result in jobs — not just mass production, but also production by the masses. In predominantly agrarian societies like India, mass manufacturing and industrialization were a prerequisite for creating jobs for young people. His Government had therefore implemented a number of ambitious initiatives to make India a destination for world-class manufacturing, notably the automotive industry, and to develop a skilled workforce that would be available for purposes of rapid economic diversification and development. The national manufacturing policy was aimed at increasing the share of manufacturing in the gross domestic product (GDP) from 16 to 25 per cent and creating 100 million additional jobs in that sector by 2022. India was well poised to realize the demographic dividend, but less than 5 per cent of its potential workforce currently received the formal training to be employable in twenty-first century jobs.

To address that shortcoming, his Government had established a Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, which was coordinating a new national mission to equip young people with the skills to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the rapidly growing economy. At the international level, the issue of employment creation and decent work in the context of norm setting was particularly important in the light of the post-2015 development agenda, which should engender systemic reforms in support of national action to empower youth through employment as a step towards sustainable development.

11. **Mr. González Franco** (Observer for Paraguay) said that his country's recently adopted National Development Plan 2015-2030 was based heavily on the Millennium Development Goals and what had been accomplished thus far in the context of the proposed sustainable development goals. Designed to attain higher standards of living, full employment and sustainable development, the Plan established an important link between development and trade, which was a driver of the economy and employment. However, the relationship between trade, employment and sustainable development could be complex because countries were in different situations and not all of them had the necessary legal, regulatory and physical infrastructure to benefit from foreign trade fully. Trade on unequal terms could generate more inequalities between and within countries. Countries in special situations had special needs and, in the interest of trade and employment, it was vital to incorporate new measures and new instruments in the multilateral agenda.

12. Being among the 16 per cent of Member States that were landlocked developing countries, Paraguay saw that lack of direct access to the sea had an impact on trade. Studies showed that economic growth in some landlocked developing countries fell 20 per cent short of potential growth and they faced transport costs up to 45 per cent higher than comparable coastal economies. The opportunities and potential benefits of being close to markets were an important stimulus for trade and investment; they encouraged growth and development and, in turn, greater employment creation. Cooperation, particularly South-South and triangular cooperation, in complement to North-South cooperation, could thus be of paramount importance in strengthening institutional capacities in the areas of sustainable development and employment creation. More importantly, it could help to address weaknesses that diminished the multiplier effect of trade as a factor of development. He urged the Council to continue encouraging open debate and draw on the rich normative heritage of the United Nations in the areas of work, equality and trade so as to guarantee the success of the development programmes to be adopted. The special needs of landlocked developing countries should be considered in greater depth during the upcoming high-level political forum on sustainable development.

13. **Mr. Khiari** (Tunisia) said that the revolution in his country had been triggered largely by high unemployment, social injustice and regional disparities and had also revealed the structural weaknesses and limitations of the economic growth that Tunisia had been experiencing at the time. While rapid, that growth had been bereft of all social justice and characterized by inequality and human rights violations. High unemployment and unstable employment affected different social demographic categories of jobseekers, principally young people and university graduates. Through the efforts of successive Governments, the unemployment rate had dropped from 18.3 per cent, with 704,000 unemployed in May 2011, to 15.2 per cent by the first quarter of 2014. However, the interior regions of the country still suffered from higher levels of unemployment and poverty than the coastal regions.

14. In the transition to democracy and in an effort to address the situation without delay, his Government had adopted a national employment strategy 2013-2017, drafted by the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment working together with all relevant stakeholders, including unemployed youth, representatives of civil society and members of parliament. The strategy, which was in line with broader international efforts to reduce unemployment, comprised a number of objectives, the first of which was to focus macroeconomic policy on employment through fiscal, monetary and banking policies, improving the investment climate and encouraging research and development as well as social dialogue. He stressed the need to identify and revitalize income- and employment-generating sectors and support the private sector to boost job creation by improving the business environment and promoting, inter alia, a regulatory framework conducive to employment. The strategy was also aimed at enhancing regional

development, building women's capacity and improving the employability of the labour force.

15. In January 2013, Tunisia, a longstanding and committed member of the International Labour Organization, had signed a new social contract with its national labour unions, covering economic growth, regional development, employment and vocational training. The social contract also provided a framework to improve workplace relationships, guaranteed decent work and social protection, and institutionalized permanent tripartite social dialogue.

16. **Mr. Maksimychev** (Russian Federation) said that the economically active population was one of the main drivers of development. An underutilized labour force resulted in an economy working at half speed and unable to fulfil its production potential. Unemployment in the Russian Federation currently stood at 5.5 per cent, and its experience in reducing unemployment showed that employment policies should focus primarily on young people and women. Every year, of the country's approximately 1.7 million young jobseekers, about 74 per cent found decent jobs. That success was the result of integrated measures, including organizing vocational guidance for young people at State level; providing apprenticeships for graduates; and providing direct assistance in finding jobs. Every year, some 1.3 million young people between 14 and 29 years of age received vocational guidance on the different specialties available, and the requirements for and the current and expected demand for each specialty in the labour market, whether in a particular region or in the country as a whole. Young people were thus able to make informed decisions about their future profession. Small business development also played an important role in solving the problem of youth unemployment as it increased the number of jobs available and expanded the fields of economic activity.

17. Improving education for women and increasing their economic and social participation improved their employability. Since 2012, Russia had been implementing comprehensive measures to improve the work-life balance for women, including providing access to preschool and other services for younger children; promoting flexible working hours and telecommuting; helping women to find a job or become self-employed; and organizing vocational training for women on maternity leave or with children under the age of three.

18. The Russian Federation called for goal 8 and other sustainable development goals proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals to be included in the post-2015 development agenda, and stood ready to continue a constructive dialogue on developing global indicators for assessing progress to that end.

19. *Mr. Khiari (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

20. **Mr.** Antonio **de Aguiar Patriota** (Brazil), recalling the lingering devastating effects of 1980s neoliberal economic policies and the 2008 economic and financial crisis, said that the trend of increased unemployment must be reversed. There was a need for a new paradigm in which States were supported in their development efforts to put people first and reduce inequalities through sustained economic growth, while protecting the environment. To achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all by 2030, priority must be given to cross-cutting approaches through inclusive policies for the creation of more and better-quality jobs that not only generated economic growth and welfare, but also acted as drivers of social inclusion and poverty reduction. The formalization of the labour market, the expansion of minimum wage, social protection nets, universal access to health and education and other distributive policies could be instrumental in improving standards of living, and multisectoral policies combining income generation with education, health and environmental requirements could yield positive results.

21. While gender equality in employment was an important issue, with youth unemployment rates at record levels, it was urgent to provide more opportunities for young people to acquire the skills to become competitive in the labour market. Access to quality primary and secondary education and technical and vocational training was essential for sustainable employment. Consequently, his Government and the private sector had worked together to develop the National Services for Industrial, Agricultural and Commercial Apprenticeships, a public-private network of technical apprenticeship schools that aimed to increase the supply of skilled labour and competition in the labour market. In addition, since 2011, the National Programme for Access to Technical Education and Employment had expanded the network and created more opportunities for vulnerable or marginalized populations.

22. As Professor Stiglitz had stressed in the panel discussion at the Council's 15th meeting, economic growth by itself did not necessarily generate employment; Governments must be given adequate policy space to support inclusive and sustainable development. The success of domestic policies for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable employment depended on an international enabling environment that was supportive of the needs and priorities of developing countries and the realization of urgent reforms in global economic and financial governance, as well as in international trade. Global regimes should proactively support domestic reforms in developing countries rather than act as barriers; international cooperation to that end was thus vital. A universally applicable sustainable development agenda could provide a favourable context for developed countries to live up to their intergovernmental commitments, with scaled-up technical assistance and capacity-building in science, technology and innovation. South-South cooperation could also provide a much-needed complementary contribution. Moreover, given the increasingly important role of the private sector as a driver of sustainable development, Governments would need to acquire the necessary regulatory capacity to stimulate private enterprise and attract businesses while preserving national priorities and development strategies. Brazil was fully committed to ensuring that the international community made the most of the 2015 landmark conferences, which would provide an opportunity to take coherent steps towards a world of full and productive employment.

23. **Mr. Grant** (Observer for Canada) said that promoting decent jobs and sustainable economic growth at home and abroad were key elements of his country's prosperity agenda. While over 200 million jobs would be needed by 2020 to combat global unemployment and absorb growth in the labour force, it should be emphasized that decent jobs — not just any jobs — would be required, for there could be no prosperity without decent jobs. Central to that challenge was meeting the needs of young people, whose talents, creativity and energy represented immense potential for economic growth and an opportunity for greater inclusion. Failing to integrate young men and women in the economy would squander an opportunity to support both economic and individual growth. However, with appropriate policies, skills training and labour market measures, developed and developing countries alike could greatly benefit from that demographic dividend. In Canada, every federal budget since 2009 had focused on training for in-demand jobs and skilled trades; promoting careers in skilled trades and in sciences and technology among young Canadians; supporting apprenticeships through tax measures, grants and loans; helping to link unemployed persons with prospective employers; and providing more and better labour market information. Federal and local authorities also provided training and apprenticeship programmes for aboriginal peoples to help them to secure sustainable and meaningful employment.

24. Sustainable economic growth, which continued to be a priority of Canadian foreign policy, must be inclusive and job-rich to drive poverty reduction. The links between poverty, development and the environment were undeniable. Canada therefore supported proposed goal 8 of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and was pleased that elements of the decent work agenda had been mainstreamed across other proposed goals. His country also supported the Statistical Commission and technical experts in defining the appropriate decent work indicators, building on existing definitions, data, and international agreements, as appropriate. Fundamental labour rights and the development of high labour standards were essential to achieving the goal. It was important to be competitive in the global marketplace, but not at the expense of high labour standards, which engendered high performance and productivity. In addition, eliminating discrimination and ensuring full participation in the labour market led to a more innovative and competitive economy. Employers must be encouraged to draw on the ideas, skills and ingenuity of all workers. Ensuring girls' and women's access to quality education and decent work opportunities would also help to prevent harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage. Canada looked forward to continued international collaboration among Governments, civil society and the private sector in striving to make decent work for all a reality.

25. **Mr. Suazo** (Honduras) said that achieving the objectives of full employment and decent work for all would require the participation of all sectors of society and innovative approaches in terms of policies, legislation, programmes and cooperation. His Government was investing heavily in increasing employment rates, supporting families living in

extreme poverty and combating corruption. Initiatives included helping businesses take on full-time staff and pay them at least minimum wage; strengthening the agricultural sector; supporting micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises; increasing domestic and foreign investment by means of public-private partnerships and legislation to improve legal certainty; providing free online English courses and certification for all citizens, as part of an initiative aimed particularly at young people; installing over 55,000 eco-friendly stoves to provide economic opportunities for women while at the same time improving their families' health; providing direct cash transfers to families to enable children to go to school instead of working; imposing heavy penalties for failing to pay equal wages; and introducing legislation aimed at achieving 50 per cent female participation in political life by 2017.

26. **Mr. Hahn** Choonghee (Republic of Korea) said that employment and decent work were the foundation for dignity and prosperity at the individual, national and global levels and were closely linked to sustainable development. To tackle unemployment, his Government had developed national competency standards for vocational education and training to increase employment opportunities for youth; taken steps to increase women's participation in the workforce by encouraging men to share childcare responsibilities and introducing part-time and flexible working hours in the public sector; introduced re-employment services such as free training to help middle-aged and elderly people remain economically active; developed a plan to convert 65,000 non-regular public sector workers to regular status between 2013 and 2015; strengthened employment safety nets; and begun revamping market institutions and practices to keep up with economic and social changes and build an employment system based on an open and fair labour market. The challenges of low employment rates among women and youth, economic and social inequalities and inappropriate working conditions would require innovative and integrated approaches. Another important future challenge would be the creation of more green jobs.

27. **Ms. Franceschi Navarro** (Panama) said that employment creation was a particularly significant aspect of sustainable development, given that it was a common denominator of many economic growth policies. While Panama had achieved 96 per cent employment among its economically active population, 35 per cent of those people were working in the informal sector. Her Government had therefore introduced measures to improve access to financial services for small enterprises and enable them to gain legal status without being burdened by taxes or heavy bureaucracy.

28. Another challenge was the surplus of unskilled workers in Panama's urban areas, leading to an influx of highly skilled migrant labour to compensate. A strategic plan to address that issue had been developed and would be implemented over a period of between 7 and 10 years. In addition, the "Bilingual Panama" programme had been launched to improve English language teaching in the education system in order to make graduates more competitive on the labour market. She encouraged Member States to create quality jobs and build capacity through high-quality education at all levels since social mobility and, therefore, employment were prerequisites for sustainable economic growth.

29. **Mr. Roet** (Observer for Israel) said that despite the progress made in the past three decades, around 15 per cent of the world's population was still living on less than US$ 1.25 per day. The experience of the Millennium Development Goals had made it clear that poverty could only be addressed through an approach incorporating the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development. Experience had also shown that improving access to employment, including for women and youth, was a direct way to combat extreme poverty.

30. While Israel lacked natural resources, its diverse society provided many opportunities to create a robust and stable economy. The Government had developed numerous strategies to promote employment creation and decent work, taking into account the different abilities and cultural and religious backgrounds of the population. Programmes included retraining for engineers and computer science graduates over the age of 45; a programme to help Bedouin, Arab and ultra-Orthodox Jewish women build financial independence through microenterprises; and vocational training opportunities for youth, older persons, immigrants and persons with disabilities. His country's resilient job market had kept the unemployment rate down throughout the global financial crisis, hitting a record low of just over 5 per cent in 2014.

31. Entrepreneurs were seen as the backbone of his country's economy; 7,000 new jobs in the high-tech industry were created every year thanks to the Government's efforts to create an environment where technology-focused start-up companies could thrive. Financial support and strategic and investment partnership opportunities were available to help technological start-ups offset the challenges and risks they faced in their early stages. Entrepreneurship was fostered in the population from a young age; training programmes were offered to youth from all walks of life to familiarize them with project creation and development. Israel also promoted the role of entrepreneurship in sustainable development at the international level by sponsoring a biennial resolution on entrepreneurship for development, while, for half a century, its international development cooperation agency had been providing vocational and entrepreneurial training programmes to help generate jobs in the developing world.

32. **Ms. Byaje** (Observer for Rwanda) said that bold strategies were needed to improve employment prospects in both developed and developing countries. She hoped that the international community would deliver on its promises to help States create opportunities for decent employment that would enable people to live in dignity.

33. Following the genocide against the Tutsi, her Government had begun providing income support in the form of cash transfers for those living in poverty, as well as access to health care services and education. More recently, it had launched its "Vision 2020" initiative to accelerate poverty eradication, rural growth and the implementation of social protection. That would involve building a private-sector led economy, with entrepreneurship playing a significant role in helping Rwanda become a middle-income country by 2020. Economic growth had exceeded 8 per cent on average over the past decade, and employment outside of the dominant agricultural sector had more than tripled over the same period. There were now over 125,000 small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the country. The combination of economic growth and assistance for those in need had lifted more than 1 million Rwandans out of poverty.

34. However, rising unemployment among youth, who represented 60 per cent of the population, called for drastic measures to ensure that the number of jobs created kept pace with the supply of graduates. The Government was therefore planning to promote entrepreneurship by investing in vocational training; building a culture of entrepreneurship; facilitating the establishment of start-ups through an appropriate regulatory framework and access to financing, financial products, business services and markets; investing in research and development and supporting access to technology; and continuing to invest in infrastructure, such as the continued expansion of the electricity network to rural areas. Drivers of growth had to be transferred from the public to the private sector, and Rwandans needed guidance in making informed decisions with respect to regional and international markets. It was worth noting that regional integration had been an important element in providing jobs: free movement of goods and people within the East African Community had provided quicker and simpler access to a market of 153 million people and enabled youth to move freely to search for jobs.

35. Her country's future strategy would be to ensure economic, social, political and environmental security, looking back to its pre-colonial roots to emphasize cultural values and protect itself against ideologies that favoured genocide.

36. **Ms. Prizreni** (Albania) said that the main priorities of her Government's national employment and skills strategy for the period 2014-2020 were introducing services and programmes to ease the transition of individuals into decent work; strengthening the link between learning and labour market inclusion by providing vocational training for youth and adults; improving employment and training services in rural areas, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups such as women and girls; establishing a direct link between social assistance and reintegration into the labour market; and developing a national qualifications framework to improve governance of the labour market. An internship program for recent graduates and a scheme for unemployed youth had been put in place to address the important issue of youth unemployment. Additionally, the Government had established a national labour council to examine issues of common interest to employer and employee organizations and find solutions that were acceptable to both parties. Her Government was committed to developing sound, result-oriented employment policies.

37. **Mr. Di Luca** (Argentina) said that employment creation and decent work were cross-cutting elements

of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: not only was decent work the most effective way for people to break out of poverty, but it was also linked to inclusive economic growth and could lead to sustainable production. There must be a continued effort to implement sustainable mechanisms enabling vulnerable sectors of the population to become part of and strengthen the formal economy. For that reason, his delegation believed that the post-2015 development agenda should accord priority to decent work and to ensuring equal pay and opportunities for women and youth.

38. Decent work was a fundamental aspect of Argentine national policy. In recent years, quality employment had become a basic pillar of the production model. His Government had adopted the goal of "promoting decent work" alongside the Millennium Development Goals in 2003 and had declared 2011 the Year of Decent Work and Workers' Health and Safety. Significant progress had been made in promoting productive work, increasing social protection, creating respect for workers' fundamental rights and promoting social dialogue. Macroeconomic policy had been integrated with social and labour policies to promote the creation of decent work and establish it as the heart of economic growth, social inclusion and democratic governance.

39. **Ms. Haddad** (Australia) said that the best way to foster employment creation was through economic growth driven by the private sector. In developing countries, the private sector was responsible for 90 per cent of jobs, 60 per cent of investment and more than 80 per cent of government revenue. It was therefore important to engage directly with that sector in order to advance development. For example, Australia's "aid for trade" policy was connecting businesses in developing countries to regional and global supply chains. Private sector development would require the creation of domestic environments that supported growth while generating development opportunities for all. Under Australia's leadership, members of the Group of 20 (G20) had in 2014 committed to growing their gross domestic product by an additional 2 per cent by 2018, which would add more than US$ 2 trillion to the global economy and generate millions of jobs around the world. However, new and creative ways to engage with the private sector were also needed. In that regard, her Government had recently launched the "innovationXchange" initiative to spur innovation and collaboration, including through partnership with the private sector, across the country's aid programme.

40. Growth and employment opportunities must be fairly distributed. An estimated US$ 50 billion per year was lost in the Asia-Pacific regional alone as a result of women's limited access to jobs. G20 countries had committed to bringing 100 million more women into the labour force by 2025, which would decrease the gender gap by 25 per cent. Policies to support economic growth and employment creation must be underpinned by quality education and health care as well as stable and transparent public institutions and broad tax bases.

41. **Mr. Fowlie** (International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said that providing universal, affordable access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) had the potential for significant impact in terms of economic growth and employment creation, but the gap between the developed and developing world in terms of access to and the affordability of ICTs, while narrowing, remained significant, with 66 per cent of those in developing countries still unable to access the Internet. A notable benefit of equitable access to technology would be increased opportunities for women and youth. Currently 200 million fewer women than men enjoyed access to the Internet, but it was estimated that bringing 600 million additional women and girls online could boost global GDP by US$ 4 to $6 billion. Youth, who were early adopters of technology as well as the drivers of growth and innovation in the sector, would benefit from better training opportunities and access to capital and markets. Effecting the necessary changes would require capacity-building programmes, such as digital literacy training, to enable people to use, create and innovate with technology.

42. To maximize its potential, technology must be better integrated into policy frameworks. The achievement of the sustainable development agenda would depend significantly on how well digital technologies were employed as a means of both implementation and evaluation. ITU therefore proposed that the theme of the Council's 2016 integration segment should be "harnessing digital technologies for sustainable development".

43. **Ms. Djacta** (United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) said that employment

creation and decent work were closely related to sustainable urbanization, as cities now generated up to 80 per cent of jobs and global GDP. Very few countries had achieved sustained economic growth, rapid social development and gender equality without urbanization. However, the economic potential of cities was constrained by social inequity resulting from prohibitive living costs as well as widespread unemployment, underemployment, unstable and low-paid jobs, informal income-generating activities and substandard working conditions.

44. UN-Habitat supported strategies and policies that strengthened the capacity of cities to drive national economic growth, combat extreme poverty, generate opportunities for decent work and strengthen social cohesion. It developed and disseminated integrated approaches to improving urban productivity, competitiveness and inclusive economic growth by building local capacities in partnership with local urban authorities, community leaders, the private sector and other stakeholders. Policies at the city and national levels should focus on good urban form, density and connectivity; investment in education and skills; investment in housing, infrastructure and renewable energy; and the creation of a business environment that promoted investment, entrepreneurship and innovation. Urban authorities should introduce policies to improve the productivity of the informal sector rather than try to suppress it. Mechanisms to support small businesses and the self-employed were also extremely important.

45. UN-Habitat had designed and implemented innovative programmes for youth, who largely dwelt in cities and were three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. The post-2015 development agenda and the New Urban Agenda to be adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016 would provide opportunities to harness the economic potential of cities, integrating and balancing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Promoting urban employment, including for urban youth, should be a key element of the debate.

46. **Mr. Maseli** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) said that good-quality jobs were those that provided economic empowerment through reliable income, decent wages and social protection. Such jobs also needed to address the growing income gap, which was an issue of concern in developed and developing countries alike, and provide greater opportunities for youth and women to participate in the labour market. The challenges faced by many States included jobless economic growth, the concentration of employment in informal and rural activities with a low-skills base and low pay, employment that did not provide social protection or worker security, the exclusion of youth and women from employment opportunities and the failure of education systems to equip graduates with the skills sought on the labour market. Those challenges could not be overcome without industrialization.

47. The majority of the workforce in developing countries was employed in the agricultural and services sector, where productivity growth often remained stagnant. Unfortunately, in cases where developing countries had recently experienced rapid economic growth, it was often as a result of the export of raw commodities. In the absence of local industrial processing, the demand for highly skilled workers was largely created in countries with more developed economies, while local job markets only saw an increased demand for lower-skilled and, to a lesser extent, medium-skilled workers. The root of the problem was a persistent lack of structural transformation of the economies of many developing countries.

48. The capacity to add value at the domestic level would increase productivity, diversify economies and generate employment opportunities. Industrialization also led to growth and, therefore, increased employment in other sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing-related services. It was the most efficient means of transitioning from an informal to a formal economy. Skilled jobs also tended to provide better salaries, social protection and worker security. Furthermore, manufacturing stimulated research and development, scientific and technological innovation and entrepreneurship, all of which provided opportunities for youth and women.

49. In conclusion, he said that UNIDO stood ready to support Governments in their efforts to achieve sustainable development through employment creation and decent work by means of socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable industrialization.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.